

**NATIONAL  
WEATHER SERVICE**

**ALBUQUERQUE,  
NEW MEXICO**

**UPCOMING  
COOPERATIVE  
OBSERVER  
AWARDS:**

- **May 2005**  
**Clara Johnson**  
**Near Cuba, NM**  
**55 Years of Service**
- **June 2005**  
**Mr. & Mrs. Post**  
**Near Lindrith, NM**  
**10 Years of Service**
- **September 2005**  
**Mary Romero**  
**Near Chacon, NM**  
**20 Years of Service**

**THANKS  
FOR ALL YOUR  
HARD WORK!!!!**

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New Mexico

# Skywatcher

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

MARCH 2005

## Welcome!

The staff at the Albuquerque National Weather Service would like to welcome our cooperative observers to the very first issue of the New Mexico Skywatcher.

This newsletter was designed with you in mind. We will bring you the latest news in the cooperative observer world. Within the New Mexico Skywatcher, you will see how the NWS, as well as other government and non-government agencies, use your observational data. Your hard work is important in determining the "pulse" of our changing and precious planet.

Your observations not only help determine the state of the New Mexico drought, but provide valuable data to local

meteorologists around the nation to determine the state of the atmosphere. Is global warming actually occurring? Will the drought be a thing of the past? Researchers would never be able to study these important questions without your data. Once again, we would like to say thanks!



Ever wonder what the National Weather Service does for you? We are a federal agency under the U.S. Department of Commerce. Our

motto is "working together to save lives." There are over 120 Weather Forecast Offices across the nation, including Guam and Puerto Rico. You are probably familiar with summer and winter watches and warnings, but did you know that we also forecast for the aviation and fire weather communities? We also collect, retransmit, and archive observational data, including your cooperative observations. We are here to serve you, the public. If at any time you have questions, feel free to call or even stop by the office at the Albuquerque Sunport.

We wish you the best for the upcoming spring and summer seasons!

**Author: Daniel Porter**

## Weather Data Awareness Week

National Weather Service offices across the country, including Albuquerque, conduct "Severe Weather Awareness" and "Winter Weather Awareness" weeks each year to promote hazardous weather awareness and safety. Back in 1989, NWS Albuquerque was the first office in the country to hold "Flash Flood and Lightning

Awareness" week. We have been doing this every June for the past 16 years.

The week of March 7, 2005 was also a first. It was proclaimed "Weather Data Awareness Week" and was the first ever awareness campaign devoted solely to the Cooperative Observing Program by our office. In fact, to

our knowledge, it is the first such week ever conceived in the NWS. To be clear, many offices celebrate a "Cooperative Observer Day," but we strongly felt that an entire week dedicated to the work you do for our organization was long overdue. Why an awareness week you ask?

(continued on page 2)

## Joe's Place



**Joe Alfieri**  
Observing Program  
Leader

Welcome to the New Mexico Skywatcher! Joe's Place was designed to give you the latest news in the cooperative observer program.

If you have a standard 8-inch rain gauge, it is time to place the inner measuring tube and funnel inside the gauge. This will make observing easier and keep moisture from evaporating.

If you should need supplies, such as a replacement of a worn out rain gauge stick or additional envelopes or forms, please contact our office 1-888-386-7637.

As you know, spring can bring cold weather and snow, but the chance for

rain and thunderstorms is increasing. You can be of great service to the NWS by reporting weather conditions in your area. Please call in any sightings of tornadoes, funnel clouds, wall clouds, wind damage, strong winds, or penny size hail or larger. Your information can help forecasters make vital decisions, and verify warnings that may be issued. Don't forget to also enter this information on your B91, B92, or B83a.

Thanks to everyone who send in their forms on time. This helps our staff meet the mailing deadline to the National Climatic Data Center, which is the 15th of every month. The data you

report is recorded and made available to the public. Your accurate reports are the backbone of our nation's climatological history.

Don't forget to report the snowfall, snow depth, and liquid equivalent on your form. Instructions are printed on this form. If you would like to view a 22-minute video on how to measure this data, please give us a call and we will gladly mail you a copy.

One last reminder, if you are still using ROSA to report your observations, you must switch over to IV-ROCS or WxCoder by the 31st of March. If you need assistance, please call us.

## Weather Data Awareness Cont.

*"It is your commitment and dedication to the Cooperative Observer Program that prompted NWS Albuquerque's first ever 'Weather Data Awareness Week.'"*

Each and every day, customers from every corner of the globe access weather data that you, a volunteer cooperative observer, have recorded. Whether it is a rancher in northeast New Mexico, a climate scientist in Europe, or a weather enthusiast in Wisconsin, the weather data you collect has a profound impact on society. Many of these customers have no idea where their weather data comes from. We in the NWS most certainly do and want to get the word out. It is your commitment and dedication to the Cooperative Observer Program (coop) that prompted NWS Albuquerque's first ever "Weather Data Awareness Week."

During the week, staff members issued Public Information Statements that reached a large audience including print and broadcast media. Each day featured a fresh topic. The statements described the various instruments used to collect weather data, how coop data are used and how the general public can access your data on the Internet. Additionally, the first ever newsletter devoted to our co-op program, the one you are now reading, was distributed to all observers and made available on the NWS Albuquerque homepage

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/abq>

The week culminated in a special open-house on Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup>. Observers

from all corners of New Mexico toured the NWS office in Albuquerque, all the while enjoying food and refreshments and talking with staff members. It was a unique gathering for a special group of dedicated volunteers. Thanks to all those who visited NWS Albuquerque during the week. If you were unable to make it this year, rest assured another open-house will be in the works for 2006. We plan to make "Weather Data Awareness Week" an annual event. Thanks again for all you do.

**Author: Kerry Jones**

# Drought Lingers But Shrinking in New Mexico

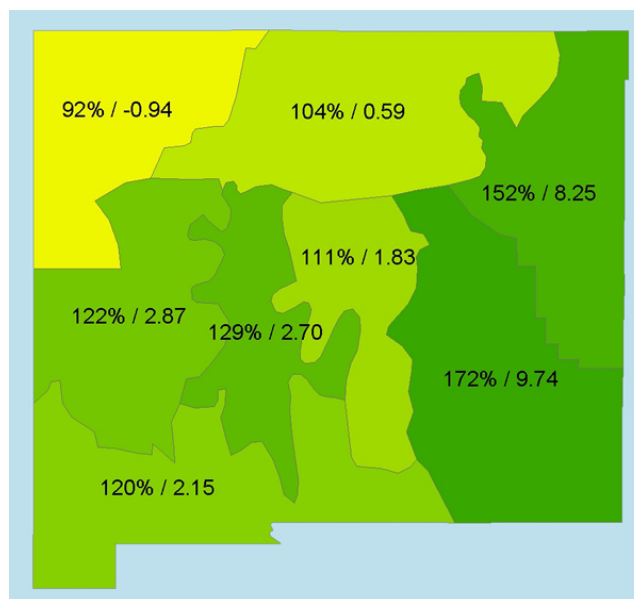
Abundant precipitation wiped out five years of rainfall deficits over a good portion of eastern New Mexico in 2004, essentially ending the drought in that portion of the state. As a whole, the eastern plains of New Mexico experienced the third wettest year in the past 110 years. The clouds were far less generous in the western counties, and some portions of northwest New Mexico actually experienced yet another dry year in 2004. Consequently, drought still lingers over the central and western counties, although heavy precipitation in January and February of 2005 have brought improving conditions.

The map on the upper right shows the percent of normal and departure (inches) from normal in 2004 for each of the eight climate divisions in New Mexico. As you can see, only one climate division (Northwest Plateau) received less than normal precipitation. Meanwhile, when all the cooperative station precipitation numbers were averaged, the Southeast Plains exhibited an average departure of +9.74 inches. The extreme was at Tatum, which was a whopping 18.88 inches above normal! However, we try to encourage people to view drought as a water budget. It's nice to get a good paycheck, but if you went four years without one, it's likely the bills are still piled up on your desk somewhere. The lower map on the right shows the cumulative situation over the five-year period (2000-2004). As you can see, four of the eight climate divisions exhibit departures within an inch of normal. These are: Southwestern Mountains (-0.58"), the Central Valley (+0.48"), the Northeast Plains (-0.51"), and the Southeast Plains (-0.28"). Rather significant deficits remained elsewhere, especially over the Northern Mountains (-13.08"). Within the Northern Mountains, some locations had five-year deficits between 20 and 26 inches. Those locations included Jemez Springs,

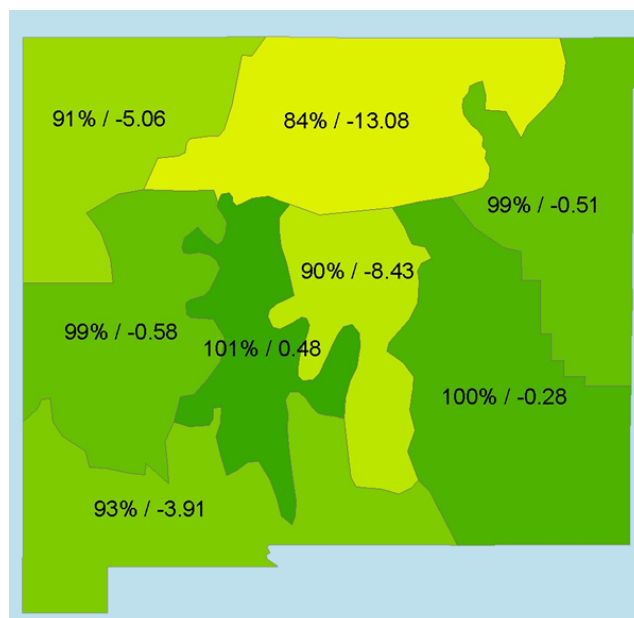
Los Alamos, and Las Vegas. It's exceedingly difficult to make up deficits that large in one wet year, and it usually takes several wet years to bring the budget back to zero.

The National Weather Service has been a very active member of the Governor's Drought Monitor since its inception in 1996. We depend very heavily on the data from our cooperative volunteers to assess drought conditions in New Mexico. Each month,

2004 (%Normal/Departure)



2000-2004 (% Normal/Departure)



# Drought Lingers But Shrinking Cont.

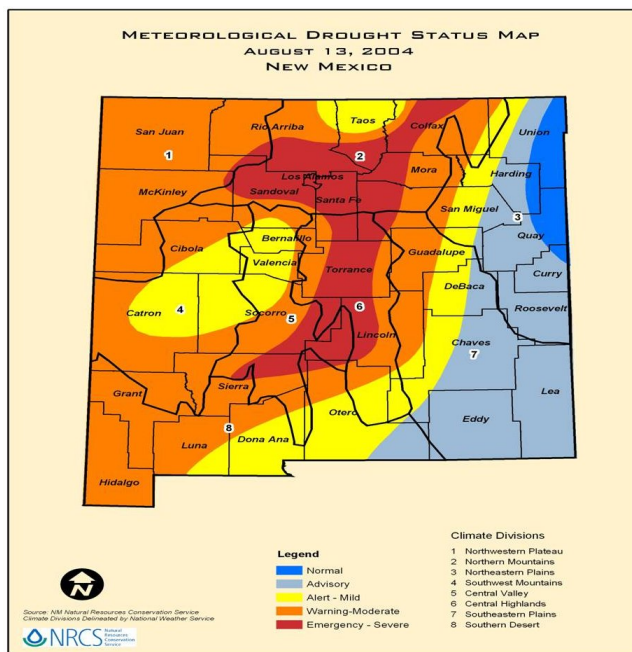


Elephant Butte Lake  
June 1997

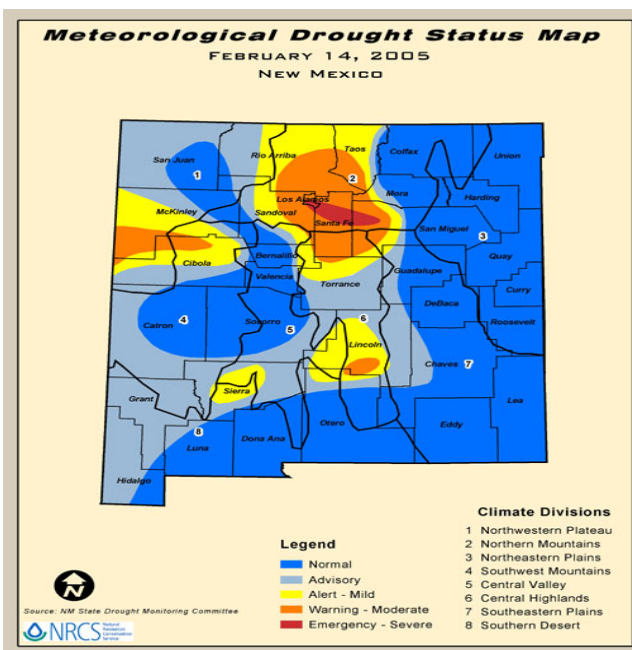


Elephant Butte Lake  
October 2004

*"Without your  
data, the detail  
shown in these  
maps would not  
be possible."*



members of the "drought monitor," including other federal agencies such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Land Management, meet with representatives from the state to assess the drought situation. We post these maps on the NRCS web page. The maps to the left show how the drought situation improved in New Mexico between August, 2004 and February, 2005. Very few states monitor drought conditions with this much detail. Without your data, the detail shown in these maps would not be possible.



With El Niño still in progress, it is likely that relatively wet weather will continue through the late winter and into spring. Consequently, further improvements in the drought situation are probable. However, the El Niño should diminish rapidly and die by April or May. For the long term, it's impossible for anyone to say whether or not the drought will continue to fade away or make a strong comeback later in the year. But one thing is certain. Using the great data you provide the state and the nation, the New Mexico Drought Monitor will continue to improve its capability to assess the drought situation.

Author: Charlie Liles

We're on the Web!  
<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/abq>



# Meet Your Observers



**Richard Desjardins at Sandia Park taking an observation.**

Within each issue of your New Mexico Skywatcher, the National Weather Service in Albuquerque will highlight cooperative observers from across our forecast area (which includes the northern two – thirds of New Mexico). This section was designed to allow observers across the state to

meet fellow hard-working volunteers within the region. We are proud of the service you provide our nation, and we want to acknowledge your hard work. If you would like to nominate someone for this section, let us know.

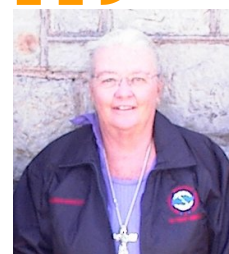
**Authors : Joe Alfieri/Daniel Porter**

## Eastern New Mexico

Editha Bartley is an exceptional cooperative weather observer for the Gascon area. She not only provides extra detail in her monthly reports, but adds remarks that help determine the total weather picture. She is very dependable in reporting heavy snow or precipitation for this remote (elevation 8250 ft) and severe weather prone part of New Mexico. She also insisted that the new owners of Valmora Inc. continue weather records for that station when she donated the land to them.

She consistently provides accurate and legible weather observations and reports other hazardous or extreme weather conditions in this remote area. There is no cell phone coverage in this area, thus she has gone into town to report hazardous weather, during both winter and summer time. In addition, she has provided additional reports for the Forest Service (wind and dew point readings), and is considered the weather “source” for the local media. Mrs. Bartley has arranged for

articles to be published in the Las Vegas, NM newspaper about extreme weather in the Gascon area. She has led a very busy life in politics and volunteering. Such activities include the Rotary Club, Highlands University Foundation Board, PEO CHAPTER, Red Cross, Director ILFELD Foundation, Northern NM Health Care, Secretary of Mora County Planning and Zoning Commission, and Chair David Cargo Mora Library Board.



**Editha Bartley**

**“Mrs. Bartley is considered the weather ‘source’ for the local media.”**

## Western New Mexico

Clara Johnson has been the cooperative observer for Johnson Ranch in northwest New Mexico since 1950. When the nearby aviation observer quit, she volunteered to take aviation observations as well. The station is directly along the airway route from Farmington to Albuquerque, NM. The highly accurate and reliable weather records kept by Mrs. Johnson

over the past 55 years have been a major factor in determining and classifying the climatological and aviation weather boundaries of this area of New Mexico. She received the John Campanius Hom award back in 1995 for exceptional volunteer service as a weather observer. Mrs. Johnson has been very active in local and state politics as well as church activities. She

is a charter member of the Cuba Baptist Church, taught Bible and Sunday school classes, organized the church library, and was a group leader of the Girls Missionary Services. She was a member of the New Mexico Cowbells and was a chairwoman for the Sandoval County Republican Party (two terms).



**Clara Johnson**

# By The Numbers

The picture below was taken February 12<sup>th</sup>, northeast of Glenwood, showing Whitewater Creek flowing over Catwalk Road, east of U.S. Highway 180.



Photo Courtesy of  
Pete Sanchez  
Glenwood Observer

The winter season so far has been wet and white. In fact, precipitation has been well above normal over much of New Mexico since the fall. The September through November period was exceptionally wet, especially over the Southeast Plains. December was below normal, but January and February were well above normal.

Taking a look at September 2004 through February 2005, the mountain locations have generally received the most precipitation. James Hale of Tatum has managed to collect the most precipitation in the past six months, thanks to an impressive 10.74 inches in September. The charts show a list of cooperative observer locations receiving the most precipitation and snowfall recently.

The winter has been mild despite all the precipitation. The coldest temperatures of the season so far were re-

corded on Christmas Eve. If you would like to submit your weather photos to the NWS, please visit <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/abq/officeinfo/submitphoto.htm>

Author: Chuck Jones

Location	Rainfall (Sept-Feb)	Co-op Observer
Tatum	21.31	James Hale
Cloudcroft	18.62	David Gilbreath
Brazos Lodge	17.64	Michael J. Hays
Chama	15.94	Eloy Olyvs

Location	Snowfall (Oct-Feb)	Co-op Observer
Red River	136.1	Robert Prunty
Brazos Lodge	122.8	Michael Hays
Wolf Canyon	109.0	Betty Curry
Gascon	102.0	Edith A. Bartley

Location	Temperature	Co-op Observer
Eagle Nest	-27 (Dec 24)	Ernest Sutliff
Angel Fire	-25 (Dec 24)	Lisa Sanchez
Cimarron	-22 (Dec 24)	Maralyn Vargas
Capulin	-20 (Dec 24)	Dale Mark

## National Weather Service

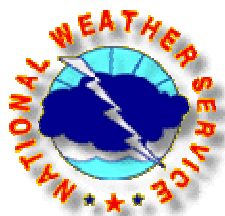
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## Working Together to Save Lives.

### How would you like to receive future issues?

The New Mexico Skywatcher will be available on your NWS website at <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/abq>. If you do not have access to the internet or would simply like a copy in the mail, return this portion to the NWS at the address on the left. We can notify you when the newest version of the newsletter is updated on the NWS website via email. If you would like to be notified via email, submit your request to [sr-abq.webmaster@noaa.gov](mailto:sr-abq.webmaster@noaa.gov) (make sure to state your name and email address).

«OBSERVER NAME»

«STN-NUM»

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«ADDRESS2»

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